

Governor Barbour, Lt. Governor Tuck, Legislators Say “Quit Scaring Teachers,” Extend the Contract Deadline

(Jackson, Miss.) Saying that some school administrators and legislators are “scaring” Mississippi teachers with “pink slips” for political purposes, Governor Haley Barbour, Lt. Governor Amy Tuck and members of the House and Senate today called on legislators to extend the deadline for teacher contracts to May 15 instead of the existing April 15, 2004, deadline.

Teachers in Mississippi’s public schools face an April 15, 2004, deadline for the yearly renewal of contracts for the upcoming school year. A teacher contract deadline extension of May 15 was added to HB 657 and passed by the Senate earlier this Session. It currently sits on the House calendar awaiting action.

Citing the fact that this year’s legislative session operates under a longer legislative calendar, the State officials explained that it makes sense that the teacher contract deadline be

extended until the Legislature finishes this year's extended budget process.

"Teachers should not be used as political pawns, and they should not be the first place to look to for cost-savings," said Governor Haley Barbour. "Instead of scaring our teachers with 'pink', Mississippi should be focused on getting out of the 'red'," he added.

<Lt. Governor quote>

Instead of the regular 90 day legislative session, sessions immediately following an election are required to last an extra month - 125 days -- by law. In the last two legislative sessions after the election of a new governor, in 1992 and 2000, the public education budget was completed and signed by the Governor on May 12 and May 22 respectively - not mid-April. In 1996, in the session after the re-election of Governor Kirk Fordice, the legislative session was put on a 90 day calendar. The current education budget is expected to be completed in May.

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